Research on Support for Immigration Reform

Findings From a Survey of 400 likely voters across AZ, GA, MI, NC, NV, PA, WI
+ Oversamples of N = 100 white swing voters and N = 200 Mexican American likely voters (swing states) +
Oversample of N = 100 citizens from mixed-status list (nationwide)

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Methodology

- Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by live telephone and text-to-online interview.

- The survey reached a total of 400 likely voters across Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin
  - Additional oversamples of 100 white swing voters and 200 Mexican American likely voters were conducted in these states.
  - The survey also reached a separate sample of 100 citizens nationwide, drawn from an opt-in list of mixed-status families.

- The survey was conducted October 25 – November 1, 2023.

- Data were weighted slightly by gender, age, region, race, education level, and party identification to reflect the expected demographic composition of likely voters statewide.

- The margin of error for the full sample is +/-4.8%. It is smaller for subgroups and split-sampled questions.

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Demographics of Likely Voters in Swing States

GENDER

Man	46%
Woman	52%
Non-binary	1%

AGE

Under 30	15%
30-39	15%
40-49	15%
50-64	26%
65+	28%

EDUCATION

High School or Less	13%
Post-H.S. / Some College	43%
College Graduate	26%
Post-Graduate	14%

40% College Grad or Post Grad

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Democrat **40%**

Republican **36%**

Ind/DK **16%**

Other **4%**

RACE

White/Caucasian	75%
Black/African American	11%
Hispanic/Latinx	8%
AAPI	2%
Native or Indigenous	1%
Middle Eastern	1%
Other	2%

REGION
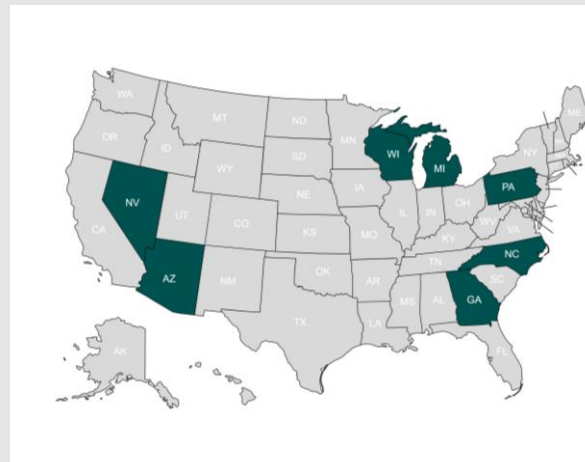
Arizona	11%
Georgia	17%
Michigan	18%
North Carolina	18%
Nevada	5%
Pennsylvania	21%
Wisconsin	10%

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Percentages do not always add up to 100 due to rounding and/or non-response

Executive Summary: Overview

- This survey of likely 2024 voters in seven key swing states (AZ, GA, MI, NC, NV, PA, & WI) shows **very broad and strong support for expanding work permits for undocumented immigrants** (including long-term workers, farm workers, Dreamers, and spouses of U.S. citizens).

  - Before messaging, **two thirds of voters in these swing states support the proposed reforms**, including nearly half who strongly favor the policy. Only one quarter of voters are opposed.

  - **Swing audiences also favor this proposed policy**, even as their 2024 presidential ballot leans towards Trump by a small margin. These findings show that the reforms are broadly popular and can transcend partisanship and candidate preference.

  - **The Democratic base, including turnout targets, love the policy**, as do Mexican American voters – a critical voting bloc who are not yet consolidated for Biden and Democrats.

- **This policy demonstrates the potential to both mobilize turnout targets and consolidate key swing audiences.** Across the board voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports the policy and are more excited to vote in the Presidential election with this policy on the table.

  - **Even among swing voters, candidates are rewarded rather than penalized for supporting the policy.** Voters – including white swing voters – not only strongly support expanding work permits, but report increased enthusiasm for elected officials who support it.

  - **Among citizens in mixed status families (including both turnout targets and likely voters), enthusiasm to vote in the 2024 Presidential election grows both overall and in terms of intensity after they hear about the proposed policy**, signaling that the proposed reforms to immigration policy could be a catalyst for mobilizing low-propensity voters.

Executive Summary: Messaging

- The best messaging on this issue – messages that work for both persuasion and turnout audiences – **combine emotional appeals with calls for practicality**: highlighting both the challenges mixed-status families face and the economic benefits to American workers and the economy of legalizing long-term, hardworking immigrants.

  - The best trio of messages overall tell a ***Personal Story*** about the reality of living in a mixed-status family, raise the issue of the ***Exploitation*** of undocumented immigrants and how it negatively impacts both them and everyone in America, and remind voters that our ***Workforce*** depends on undocumented immigrants.

  - An emotional family separation message about ***Mixed Status*** **families resonates very strongly with those who have undocumented relatives** and does not generate backlash among any key groups, but is weaker overall. A variation highlighting *Children* specifically is weaker among persuasion targets, but is very strong with Democrats, so is recommended for base audiences only.

  - We also know from this and other work that **reminding voters repeatedly that these undocumented immigrants pay taxes is very important**.

Personal Story: Most people think if you are married to a U.S. citizen you get citizenship, but that isn't true. Amanda is a U.S. citizen. Her husband Sam is undocumented. Amanda and Sam lived together in the U.S. for over a decade, working and paying taxes, and have children together. But Sam had to leave the country for a family emergency, and now he's barred from coming back, and Amanda is raising their children alone. These families belong together.

Exploitation: Undocumented immigrants who are living and working among us, contributing to our communities and doing jobs no one else wants to do, are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, wage theft, and abuse because they lack legal protection. When we allow greedy employers to exploit undocumented people for cheap labor, it drives down wages for everyone. Giving hardworking people the permits they need to work legally helps all of us economically and it's the right thing to do.
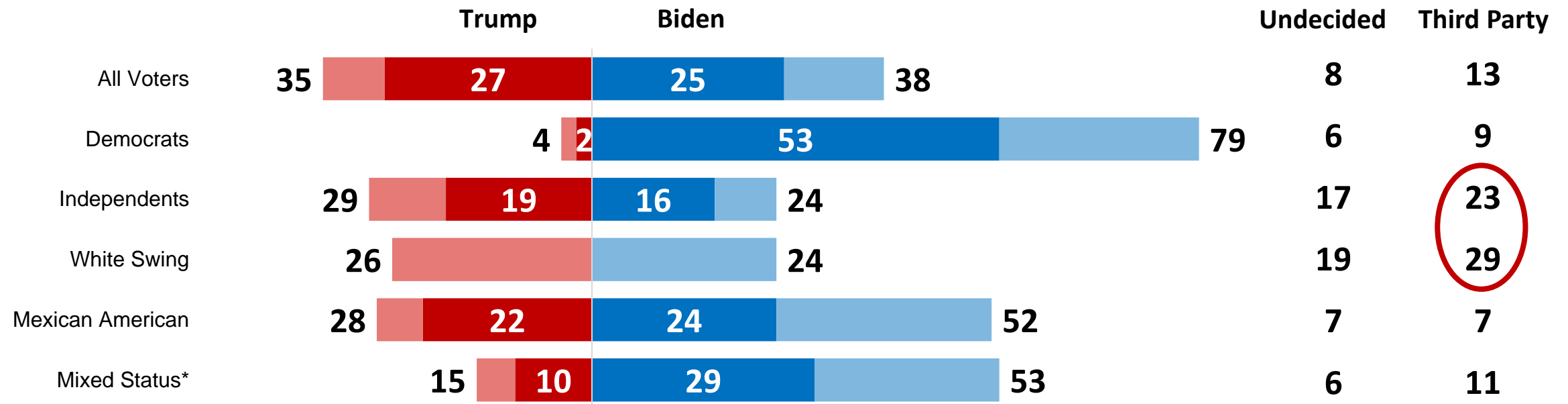
Workforce: Immigrants are vital to our country's workforce, filling essential jobs that no one else is willing to do in our farms, factories, hospitals, nursing homes, and more. We need immigrant workers – nearly three quarters of agriculture workers in the U.S. are immigrants – and half of them are undocumented. Without these workers, we can't produce food, or care for our sick and elderly. We all do better when working people can get the permits they need to live and work here successfully.

Mixed Families: Right now, over 2 million U.S. citizens are married to undocumented immigrants. Some of these families live under the constant threat of indefinite separation from spouses and children, others are already separated. Separating families is wrong, and it harms all of us – tearing our communities apart and leaving behind essential unfilled jobs, spouses with no way of supporting their families, and traumatized children. We need to keep families together and allow hardworking immigrants to get legal work permits.

Mixed Families – Children: Right now, nearly six million children in the U.S. live in households where only one parent has legal status. Some live under the constant threat of their families being separated, others already are. Separating families is wrong, and it harms all of us – tearing our communities apart and leaving behind essential unfilled jobs, spouses with no way of supporting their families, and traumatized children. We need to keep families together and allow hardworking immigrants to get legal work permits.

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Voters in these swing states are split nearly evenly on their Presidential vote choice at this early stage of the race, with just over a fifth undecided or reporting interest in voting third party. Among independents and white swing voters, Trump has a slight advantage, and a substantial portion of these voters are undecided or leaning third party. A majority of Mexican American voters are in the Biden camp, but this important group is far from consolidated – over a quarter express allegiance to Trump, with high intensity.

2024 Presidential Election Vote

	Trump	Biden	Undecided	Third Party
All Voters	35 / 27	25 / 38	8	13
Democrats	4 / 2	53 / 79	6	9
Independents	29 / 19	16 / 24	17	23
White Swing	26	24	19	29
Mexican American	28 / 22	24 / 52	7	7
Mixed Status*	15 / 10	29 / 53	6	11

Legend:
- Biden – Not So Strong/Lean
- Biden – Strong
- Trump – Not So Strong/Lean
- Trump – Strong

*Defined as having any family members – including a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or cousin – who are currently living the U.S. as undocumented immigrants

And if the 2024 election for President were held today, and the candidates were: [ROTATE] Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump or a third party For whom would you vote, or are you undecided? [IF CHOICE:] Would you say you support [CANDIDATE] strongly or not so strongly? [IF UNDECIDED:] Well, if the election was held today and you had to decide, toward whom do you lean?

Expanding work permits for undocumented immigrants (including long-term workers, farm workers, Dreamers, and spouses of U.S. citizens) is very popular in these swing states. The policy is favored by two thirds of voters before they hear any messaging, and it is strongly favored by nearly half. Mexican American voters, Democrats, and voters in mixed status families support the policy at very high levels and with very high intensity. White swing voters support the policy at even higher levels than voters overall, and a majority of independents also support it.

Expanding Work Permits for Undocumented Immigrants

	Oppose	Favor		Undecided
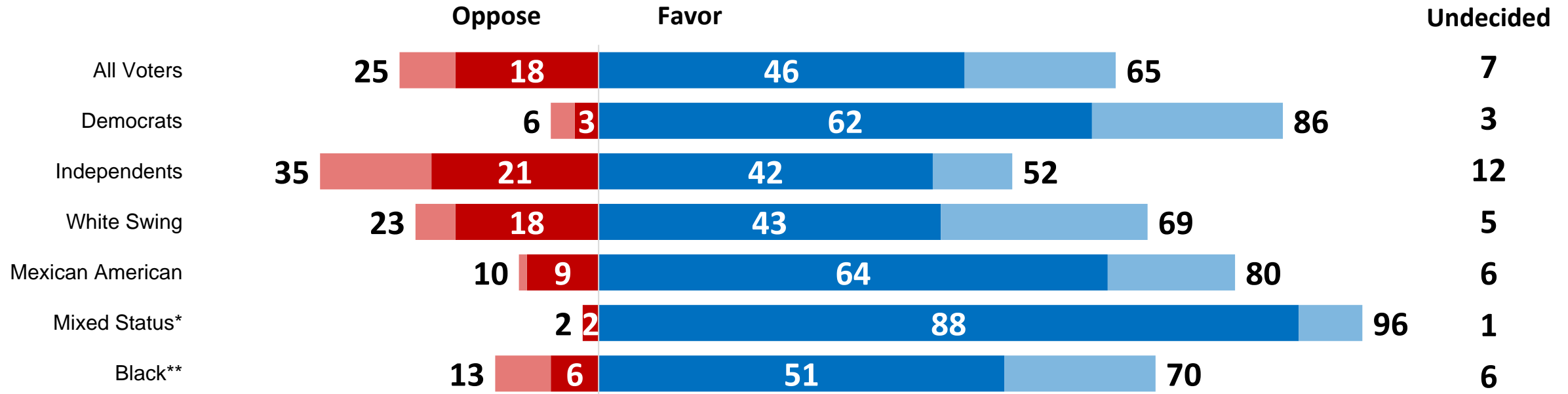
	Not So Strongly/Lean Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Strongly Favor	Not So Strongly/Lean Favor	Favor Total	Undecided
All Voters	25	18	46		65	7
Democrats	6	3	62		86	3
Independents	35	21	42		52	12
White Swing	23	18	43		69	5
Mexican American	10	9	64		80	6
Mixed Status*	2	2	88		96	1
Black**	13	6	51		70	6

Legend:
- Not So Strongly/Lean Favor
- Not So Strongly/Lean Oppose
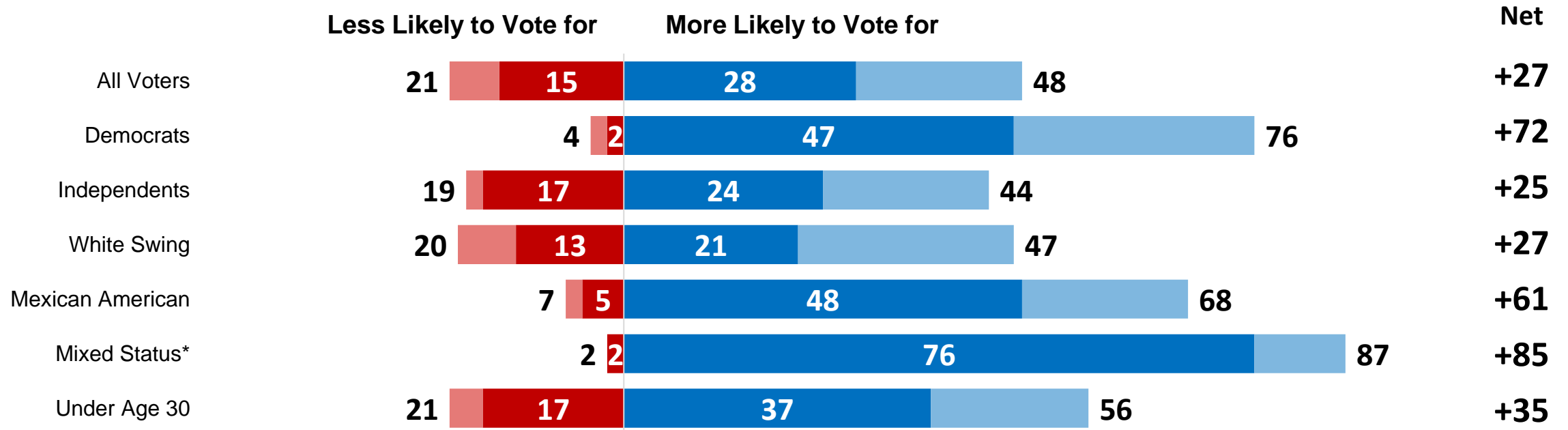- Strongly Favor
- Strongly Favor

*Defined as having any family members – including a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or cousin – who are currently living the U.S. as undocumented immigrants

**Small N Size: Margin of Error is high

Here is a description of a proposed change to federal immigration policy: This program would expand work permits for the following groups of undocumented immigrants: long-term immigrants who have been working and paying taxes in the U.S. for more than 10 years; farm workers; immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children (Dreamers without DACA); immigrants who are married to US citizens. Do you favor or oppose this proposal to expand work permits for these groups of undocumented immigrants?

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Across the board voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports the policy. Voters are more likely to vote for a generic candidate who supports expanding work permits by a margin of +27 points. White swing voters and independents both support a pro-work permit candidate by essentially the same margin, and it is an even greater motivator among young voters. Mexican Americans are more likely to vote for such a candidate by an overwhelming +61 points, Democrats by an even larger +72, and mixed status families by a near-unanimous +85.

Support for Candidate Who Supports Expanding Work Permits

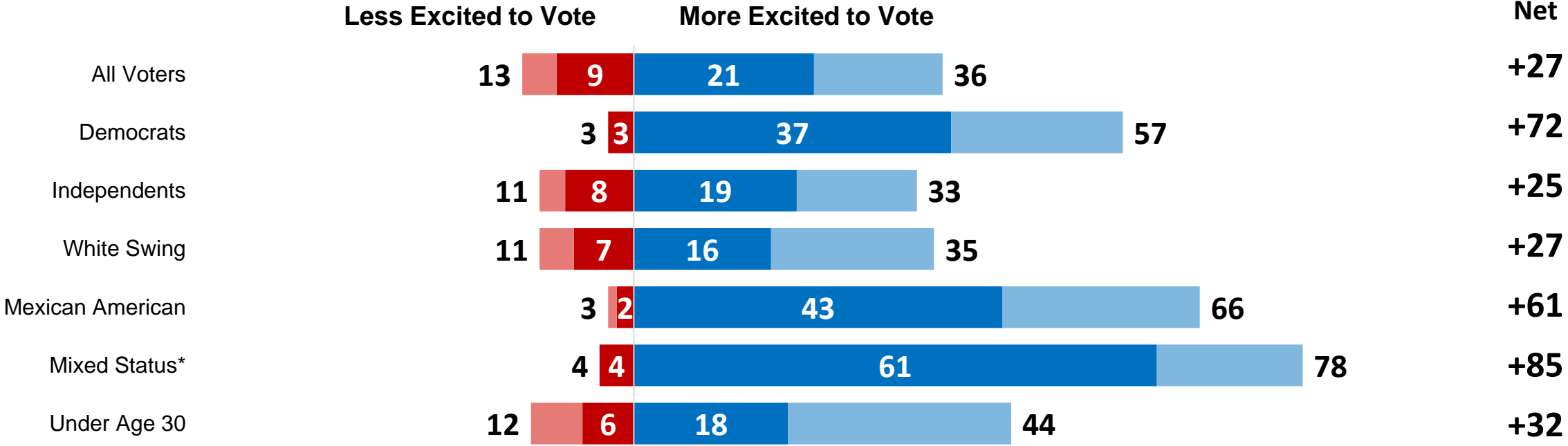|	Less Likely to Vote for	More Likely to Vote for	Net
All Voters	21 / 15	28 / 48	**+27**
Democrats	4 / 2	47 / 76	**+72**
Independents	19 / 17	24 / 44	**+25**
White Swing	20 / 13	21 / 47	**+27**
Mexican American	7 / 5	48 / 68	**+61**
Mixed Status*	2 / 2	76 / 87	**+85**
Under Age 30	21 / 17	37 / 56	**+35**

Somewhat More Likely to Vote for
Much More Likely to Vote for
Somewhat Less Likely to Vote for
Much Less Likely to Vote for

*Defined as having any family members – including a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or cousin – who are currently living the U.S. as undocumented immigrants

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If a candidate for office supported this proposed expansion of work permits, would that make you more or less likely to vote for that candidate, or does it make no difference to you?

Overall, voters would be more excited to vote in the Presidential election if a candidate for President supported expanding work permits by a margin of +23 points, and white swing voters and independents are more excited to vote by a similar margin. It increases young voters' excitement by an even larger margin. For Democrats (+54), Mexican Americans (+63), and mixed status families (+74), this policy would substantially increase their excitement in the Presidential Election, and intensity is very high.

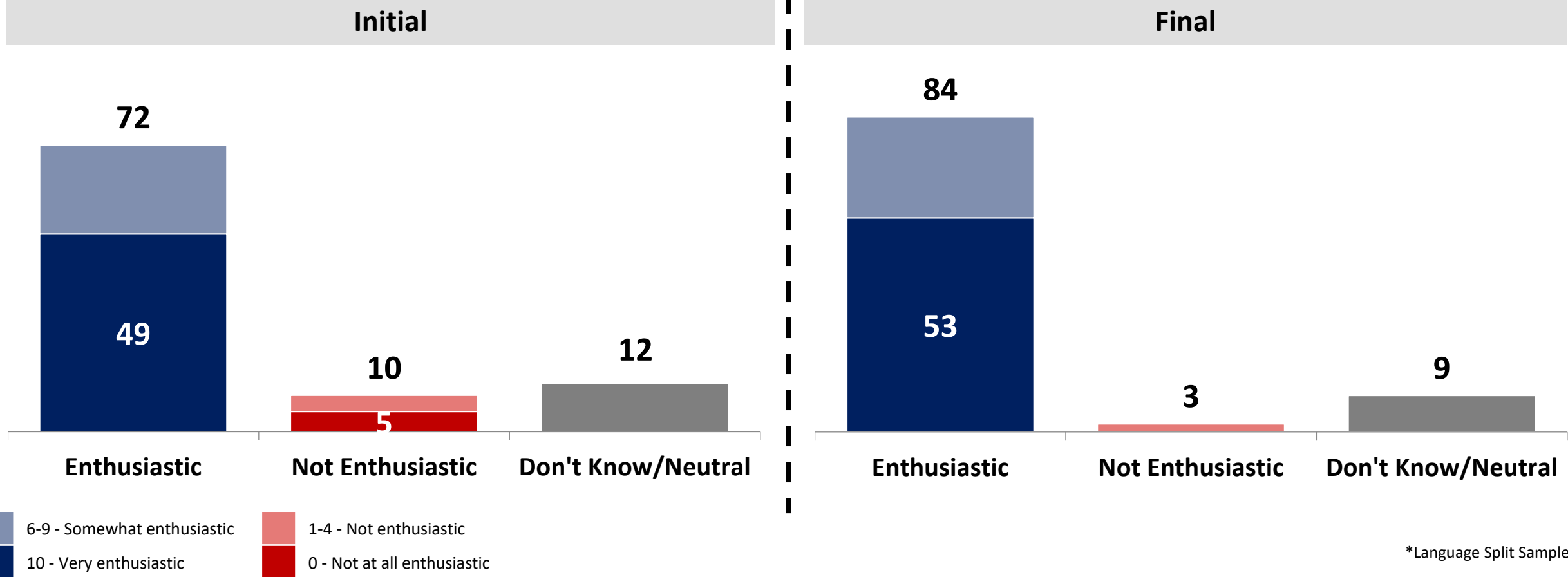## Mobilization for Presidential Candidate Who Supports Expanding Work Permits

	Less Excited to Vote	More Excited to Vote	Net
All Voters	13 — 9	21 — 36	+27
Democrats	3 — 3	37 — 57	+72
Independents	11 — 8	19 — 33	+25
White Swing	11 — 7	16 — 35	+27
Mexican American	3 — 2	43 — 66	+61
Mixed Status*	4 — 4	61 — 78	+85
Under Age 30	12 — 6	18 — 44	+32

Legend:
- Somewhat More Excited to Vote (light blue)
- Much More Excited to Vote (dark blue)
- Somewhat Less Excited to Vote (light red)
- Much Less Excited to Vote (dark red)

*Defined as having any family members – including a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or cousin – who are currently living the U.S. as undocumented immigrants

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If a candidate for President supported this proposed expansion of work permits, would that make you more or less excited to vote in the 2024 Presidential election, or does it make no difference to you?

Among citizens with undocumented family members – many of whom are turnout targets – enthusiasm to vote in the presidential election increases substantially after they hear about the proposed policy. Intensity increases by several points as well, and it is not only because of improvement among the softly unenthusiastic – the level of strong disengagement falls as well.

2024 Presidential Election Vote Enthusiasm – Mixed Status Citizens

Initial

Category	Value
Enthusiastic	72 (49 very)
Not Enthusiastic	10 (5)
Don't Know/Neutral	12

Final

Category	Value
Enthusiastic	84 (53 very)
Not Enthusiastic	3
Don't Know/Neutral	9

Legend:
- 6-9 - Somewhat enthusiastic
- 10 - Very enthusiastic
- 1-4 - Not enthusiastic
- 0 - Not at all enthusiastic

*Language Split Sampled

Now thinking about it a different way, some people feel very enthusiastic about voting in the next election for President while others don't feel enthusiastic at all, and many are in between. How about you—using a scale from ZERO to TEN, please tell me how enthusiastic you are to vote in the November 2024 election for President, Congress, and other offices. TEN means you are VERY enthusiastic to vote and ZERO means you are NOT AT ALL enthusiastic to vote. You can use any number in between.

Best Messages Overall

[PERSONAL STORY] Most people think if you are married to a U.S. citizen you get citizenship, but that isn't true. Amanda is a U.S. citizen. Her husband Sam is undocumented. Amanda and Sam lived together in the U.S. for over a decade, working and paying taxes, and have children together. But Sam had to leave the country for a family emergency, and now he's barred from coming back, and Amanda is raising their children alone. These families belong together.

[EXPLOITATION] Undocumented immigrants who are living and working among us, contributing to our communities and doing jobs no one else wants to do, are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, wage theft, and abuse because they lack legal protection. When we allow greedy employers to exploit undocumented people for cheap labor, it drives down wages for everyone. Giving hardworking people the permits they need to work legally helps all of us economically and it's the right thing to do.

[WORKFORCE] Immigrants are vital to our country's workforce, filling essential jobs that no one else is willing to do in our farms, factories, hospitals, nursing homes, and more. We need immigrant workers – nearly three quarters of agriculture workers in the U.S. are immigrants – and half of them are undocumented. Without these workers, we can't produce food, or care for our sick and elderly. We all do better when working people can get the permits they need to live and work here successfully.

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Additional Strong Messages

For Mixed Status Families:

[MIXED FAMILIES] Right now, over 2 million U.S. citizens are married to undocumented immigrants. Some of these families live under the constant threat of indefinite separation from spouses and children, others are already separated. Separating families is wrong, and it harms all of us – tearing our communities apart and leaving behind essential unfilled jobs, spouses with no way of supporting their families, and traumatized children. We need to keep families together and allow hardworking immigrants to get legal work permits.

For Democrats:

[MIXED FAMILIES – CHILDREN] Right now, nearly six million children in the U.S. live in households where only one parent has legal status. Some live under the constant threat of their families being separated, others already are. Separating families is wrong, and it harms all of us – tearing our communities apart and leaving behind essential unfilled jobs, spouses with no way of supporting their families, and traumatized children. We need to keep families together and allow hardworking immigrants to get legal work permits.

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The most effective messaging on this issue rates high overall and appeals to target base, persuasion, and turnout audiences: *Personal Story, Exploitation,* **and** *Workforce.* **These messages pair emotional and ethical appeals with practical and economic arguments. They should form the core of a communications strategy. The version of the** *Mixed Status* **message focused on citizens and their spouses rates lower overall, but extremely high among voters who have undocumented family members, without generating backlash among other target groups. A version focusing more on** *Children* **is weaker among persuasion targets, but is very strong with Democrats.**

Messages: Demographics

Messages (% Very Convincing)	Total	Democrats	Independents	White Swing	Mexican American	Mixed Status
Timeline	46	54	39	38	67	79
Morally Right	46	66	31	40	61	80
Personal Story	45	61	56	45	66	88
Mixed Families – Children	45	71	29	36	59	80
Exploitation	44	66	49	46	64	80
Workforce	44	67	41	45	67	82
Taxes – Taxpayers	42	61	44	44	66	86
Taxes – Companies	41	70	23	31	59	81
Mixed Families	41	64	50	40	67	96
Labor Shortage	40	67	33	34	57	72

All Items Split-Sampled

Now, I'm going to read you some statements from people who support expanding work permits for undocumented long-term immigrants who have been working and paying taxes in the U.S. for decades, undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children, and undocumented immigrants married to U.S. citizens. Please tell me whether each statement I read is a VERY convincing, SOMEWHAT convincing, NOT TOO convincing, or NOT AT ALL convincing reason to support expanding work permits for these groups of undocumented immigrants. If you are not sure how you feel about a particular item, please say so. **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

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